

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 2, 2012

Agenda Item: Flathead Lake North Shore SP/WMA Farming Lease

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Approval of Final Rule/Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

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Background

The proposed action is a three-year share-crop farming lease with a private operator to improve food and cover for wildlife, particularly spring migrating waterfowl and upland birds, and to help manage weeds on the Flathead Lake North Shore State Park/Wildlife Management Area.

Public Involvement Process & Results

The draft environmental assessment was out for a two-week public review from June 28 through July 12, 2012. The public was notified in the following manners to comment on the draft EA, the proposed action, and the alternatives: two public notices in each of these newspapers: Flathead Beacon, Bigfork Eagle, and Daily Inter Lake; one statewide press release; public notice on the FWP website; and notification of neighboring landowners and interested parties that commented on the proposal for the purchase of the North Shore SP/WMA. The draft EA has been finalized and a Decision Notice rendered. FWP received five comments from the public, all supportive.

Alternatives and Analysis

No Action - If the proposed action is not implemented the quality and function of food and cover for ducks, pheasants, white-tailed deer, and ground-nesting songbirds will deteriorate and noxious weeds will increase. Farming under a lease arrangement for establishing food plots and nesting cover fields will not be completed, which would negatively impact wildlife populations and hunter opportunities. Because of an increase in weeds on the property there would be an increased cost for FWP for weed control.

Proposed Action - The proposed action would use the time, fuel, and equipment of a private agricultural operator to enhance wildlife habitat by providing food plots, nesting cover, and weed control at no direct expense to FWP. This action would result in negligible environmental impacts associated with customary farming activities on the SP/WMA and by operators on surrounding private lands.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Approve the proposed action to improve upland bird and migratory waterfowl habitat on the North Shore SP/WMA.

Proposed

I move to approve the North Shore SP/WMA farming lease arrangement.